بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Khatam Sharif

حضرت علاء الدولہ سمنانی

In honour of the venerable

Shaykh Ala al Dawlah Simnani ق

"*I do not know why I am, or who I am, or how I am:*
All I know is that I am carrying the throne of God's law."

It is said that the reality of man is that it was his *ruh,* spirit, which was created first. In one Hadith Sharif Rasulullah ﷺ said the physical body was created two thousand years after the spirit. So it is the spirit which is man's reality and not the body. The *ruh* remained for this period in the Divine Presence and that is its origin, the origin of all human beings. For this reason Allah Almighty gave the name *insan* for human beings, which is from the word *uns*, meaning to be intimate.

It was when the physical form that was given to human beings was brought together with the soul and sent to the earth that they began to forget this intimacy. Ultimately, humans forgot their origin and their nearness to their Lord. Then they were given the name *Al nas* meaning those who forget. From *insan,* being intimate companions, they become *nas*, people who forget their origin and their purpose.

And so the purpose of all the prophets and *Awliya* is to remind human beings of their origin; the place where they were before they became enslaved in desires and attached to *duniya*. So Allah Almighty said, "*Remind those who are preoccupied with this life, the world of days of God Almighty, when they were in the shade of His Presence, and the station of nearness*."

It is realisation of one's purpose in life which is the beginning of the journey back to the origin.

Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah رضي الله عنه narrates that Rasulullah ﷺ said, "*The worst of what I fear for my community is the pursuit of passion and ambition for the future, for the passion leads away from the truth, while ambition makes one forget the next world*."

Rasulullah ﷺ knew the dangers and pitfalls facing his *Ummah* as it will be the attraction to *duniya* that will lead them astray. The masters explain that whilst we are in *duniya* we must not be of it.

One such person who was positioned in *duniya* at its highest level, surrounded by all its attractions, wealth, power, extravagant comforts and seductions was Ahmad bin Muhammad al Simnani ق.

Life

Shaykh Abu'l Mukarram Rukun al Din Ala al Dawlah Ahmad bin Muhammad al Simnani ق was born in Dhul Hijja 659 AH, November 1261, into a wealthy Persian family in the village of Biyabanak, situated to the south of Simnan. Many of his family members and relatives held prominent positions in the service of the Mongol rulers of the time. Following their invasion of Persia, the Mongols sought to employ locals in prominent posts to administer and govern their lands as these people had a much better understanding of the ways and cultures of the inhabitants.

Therefore, other than the rulers themselves, the viziers, ministries and other administrations were occupied by Persians. Both of the Mongol rulers, Arghun Khan and Ghazan Khan, were brought into Islam by one of Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra's ق deputies, Shaykh Saif al Din Bakharzi ق. The Mongol rulers respected and honoured this family, giving them great importance in the royal courts as they were given prominent positions and the family became known as Malik. Shaykh Simnani's ق father, Malik Shaykh Sharaf al Din Muhammad ق, held such posts as master of the royal guards, master of the exchequer and lord of Baghdad. His uncle, Jalal al Dini Mukhlis became a very influential advisor and vizier to the Emperor.

This noble background gave Shaykh Simnani ق a very lavish upbringing as he was surrounded by luxury, splendour and opulence. Being a part of the royal court he had access to all kinds of wealth and comfort and was never short of anything. He was raised to occupy a position in the royal court with formidable power. He often accompanied the Sultan during his tours, riding with his entourage. In time, he was appointed commander of one of the armies.

Spiritual awakening

On 16th of Safar 683, May 1284, Shaykh Simnani ق participated in a battle in which two Mongol armies fought each other at *Aqkhwaja* outside Qazwin, Iraq. As the battle lines were drawn up Shaykh Simnani ق said, '*Allah hu Akbar*' and got ready to engage the enemy when at that moment he had a mystical experience in the midst of battle. He said, "*When I was busy saying takbir, Allah Almighty removed the veil of this world from in front of these blind eyes and revealed the beauty of the world to come*."

It was this single vision that was to change the course of Shaykh Simnani's ق life. It had such an impact on him that his heart felt restless and yet void of all desires. This mystical state lasted through the battle into the next day after which his heart lost all interest in *duniya*. Allah turned his heart away from *duniya* and towards *akhirah.* He decided to give up his

armour, belongings and everything else in that moment and then sought permission from Arghun Khan to leave his post in the royal court and return to his homeland, Simnan.

Although Shaykh Simnani ق was only 24 at the time, the age at which desires are at their peak, and considering that he had spent every moment of his life in comfort and ease, accustomed to the finest clothes, cuisine, riches and magnificence, he had to have experienced something far greater than anything imaginable for him to give up such a lifestyle at that young age.

The masters explain that it is not human nature to give anything up for something less. So when a person has everything in the material sense it is not easy for that person to find something more attractive. Indeed it is not through talks and lectures but only when he feels that there is something much greater which compels him to give up his lifestyle. It is in recognising and acknowledging that feeling and experience which makes all this seem worthless.

There is a story of a *wali* in India during the Mongol period that was sent an invitation from the king many times. As he was very reluctant to visit the palace, he continuously ignored the invites. One day the king arranged for a group of his soldiers to capture and bring the mystic to his court. The soldiers set out and soon found the man in the forest. As he walked by, they threw a net over him and captured him without any resistance. The soldiers carried the man into the royal court and untied him in the king's presence. The king looked upon the *faqir* and asked, *"Tell me O Darwish, how do you reach God?"*

The *faqir* replied, *"In exactly the same manner in which I came here! You get captured and pulled into His presence."*

Shaykh Simnani ق said, "*When Allah cast into my heart the light of will (nur al irada) and awakened me from the slumber of heedlessness, my soul turned away in disgust from the pleasures of this world and I became weary of the company of the Sultan*."

Shortly after this he had a second vision in which he encountered the Prophet ﷺ and Sultan al Arifin Abu Yazid al Bastami ق in a dream. Such was the impact of these experiences that despite still being in his youth, Shaykh Simnani ق was overwhelmed with grief upon reflecting on his past life, feeling that he had neglected his purpose towards his Lord. He began to compensate for his negligence by committing himself to ascetic life and adopting many hardships and rigorous practices. He started to perform 10 days of prayers every night to make up for the prayers forfeited in youth and he memorised five verses from the Qur'an each day. He began to travel seeking mystical guides. These practices eventually led to him becoming seriously ill. During his stay in Tabriz, despite his illness he immersed himself in freezing water for over an hour. When he came out of the that water, he began to pray and thank his Lord for curing him saying, *"I know that God has cured me outwardly without the efforts of the physicians and He will cure me inwardly of the sickness of love for this world and obedience to the desires."*

By the time he reached Simnan it was the month of Ramadan. As he had discarded his royal belt and dress signifying the end of that life, he entered the shrine of Shaykh Hasan Saqqak ق. He affirmed that since he had been educated in both rational and traditional sciences and

due to other commitments he was still lacking in religious education having only memorised 6 chapters of the *Qur'an*. Thus, he was determined to concentrate all his efforts on studies, learning the traditional sciences of Islam. As he was still without a master, he kept himself engaged in reading books like *Qut al-qulub* by Shaykh Abu Talib al Makki ق and also adopted the *awrads* and *wirds* from the book. However he did not feel that this was the answer and still longed to be guided.

Association

In Muharram, February 1287 he had another mystical experience. It was his routine to pray 300 rak'ats each day and repeated the *dhikr* 12000 times. A wandering *darwish* arrived in Simnan called Sharaf al Din Hanawi ق. Having lived in *Makkah sharif* for some time, he had performed Hajj three times. It was in *Makkah Sharif* that he had taken bai'yah from Shaykh Isfara'ini ق, who had instructed him to travel to Khurasan, and told him that when he found a nobleman who had undergone a religious experience, he was to become his companion and help this man. Upon meeting Shaykh Simnani ق, Sharaf al Din Hanawi ق immediately recognised him as the person his Shaykh had instructed him about and so he remained in his company and began to guide him.

One day after offering their prayers together, Shaykh Simnani ق noticed his companion engaged in a strange *dhikr* whereby he threw his head from side to side. After he had finished, Shaykh Simnani ق asked if he was doing this because his head hurt. He replied that this was a particular *dhikr.* Shaykh Simnani ق reprimanded him and told him that it was better to keep to the *dhikr* of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr al Siddique ﷺ, repeating the full *Kalimah sharif*.

Shaykh Hanawi ق replied, "*I have been given this dhikr by my shaykh and I dare not alter it*. *As to the significance of the head movement, With, La ilaha, I negate everything besides God, and with the ill Allah I affirm the love of God in the heart. I move so that the energy of the dhikr reaches the physical heart which is located in the flank of the human body. As a result the transparency which lies between this, physical, heart and the real, mystical, heart becomes actualised and the light of faith casts a ray from the real heart upon the human body."*

Thus, Shaykh Sharaf al Din Hanawi ق introduced Shaykh Simnani ق to this unique *dhikr* practice. On his first night of practice, Shaykh Simnani ق underwent mystical experiences that made him doubt his own sanity. When he described them to his companion, Shaykh Hanawi ق informed him that such states were usually experienced after a long time. Shaykh Simnani ق then asked him further about his shaykh, Shaykh Nur al Din Isfarani ق. As a result of his association with Shaykh Hanawi ق and the mystical states he experienced under his guidance, Shaykh Simnani ق continued his exercises and practices according to the way of Shaykh Isfarani ق using Shaykh Hanawi ق as an intermediary. Shaykh Isfarani ق sent an authorisation for Shaykh Simanani ق to enter into *Khalwa* and a reply to his letter containing explanations of his mystical experiences and visions. Shaykh Simnani ق also received a *khirqah,* robe.

Shaykh Simnani ق eventually travelled to Baghdad and entered into the presence of his Shaykh in Ramadan 688. He remained with Shaykh Isfarani ق until 26th of Ramadan and

was then given permission to travel to Hajj and then to visit Madina Sharif. Upon returning from Hajj in Muharram 689, he spent more time with his Shaykh and was then given *khilafah* in the *tariqah*. Shaykh Isfarani ق then ordered him to return to Simnan and serve his mother.

Shaykh Ala Dawla Simnani ق is linked to the Kubrawi *tariqah* and Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق through 4 Grandshaykhs.

Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق
Shaykh Ali yi Lala ق
Shaykh Ahmad Juzjani ق
Shaykh Nur al Din Abd al Rahman Isfarani ق
Shaykh Ala Dawla Simnani ق

Shaykh Ali yi Lala ق was given a *chadur,* shawl, by Rasulullah ﷺ, like the *Burdah* of Imam Busiri ق. It was this shawl that was preserved and eventually passed down to Shaykh Simnani ق as a *tabbaruk* from Shaykh Isfarani ق.

Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق

Mawlana Shaykh Abd al Rahman Jami ق write that the founder of the *Kubrawi* tariqah, Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra's ق name is Ahmad bin Umar bin Muhammad ق. His is the Imam, the Ascetic, leader of ascetics, *wali tarash* 'Maker of saints', *Abu'l Jannab*. He was born in a place called *Khiba, Khwarazm*, part of Uzbekistan, in Central Asia. In his youth he travelled through many lands and benefited from the leading shaykhs of every city he visited.

His *laqab*, *al Kubra*, is a *Qur'anic* term; *al Tammat al Kubra,* 'the big affliction'. The word *Kubra* is from *Kabir*, meaning big. Shaykh Najm al Din ق was given this title in his youth whilst he was still studying. Even at that age he had become such a renowned scholar that he was an affliction for anyone that opposed him in any scholarly debate or argument. He was unsurpassed and would always win.

Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق is the twentieth Shaykh in the *Kubrawi Tariqah* chain linking to Rasulullah ﷺ.

1. Sayyiduna Rasulullah ﷺ
2. Sayyiduna Ali رضي الله عنه
3. Imam Husayn رضي الله عنه
4. Imam Zayn al Abidin رضي الله عنه
5. Imam Muhammad Baqir رضي الله عنه
6. Imam Ja'far as Sadiq رضي الله عنه
7. Imam Musa al Kazim رضي الله عنه
8. Imam Ali Riza رضي الله عنه
9. Shaykh Maruf al Karkhi ق
10. Shaykh Sarri Saqati ق
11. Shaykh Junayd al Baghdadi ق
12. Shaykh Abu Ali ar Rudhabari ق
13. Shaykh Abu Ali al Katib ق
14. Shaykh Abu Uthman al Maghribi ق
15. Shaykh Abul Qasim Gurkani ق
16. Shaykh Abu Bakr al Nassaj ق
17. Shaykh Ahmad al Ghazali ق
18. Shaykh Abu Najib as Suhrawardi ق
19. Shaykh Ammar Yasir ق
20. Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق

Once Shaykh Najm al Din's ق teacher invited many *ulama* and *mashay'ikh* in Tabriz. As a student, he also attended the gathering and found his heart attracted towards a particular *darwish* that had been invited. Later he told his teacher how his condition had changed just

by looking at the *darwish* and asked for permission to go and visit the Shaykh. His teacher told him that it was Baba Kharij Tabrizi ق, one of the *majdhub* shaykhs in the area and agreed saying, *"We will all go to meet him."*

Upon arriving at the *darwish's* place they asked permission from the gatekeeper to enter. The *khadim* went to Baba Tabrizi ق and conveyed the message. He replied, *"Tell them, if you are to come in then enter as if you are coming into the Divine Presence."*

Shaykh Najm al Din ق understood the meaning behind these words and put his hand on his chest, as a sign of respect and humility and then entered the house. Whilst sitting in the company of baba Tabrizi ق his state began to change; his face became luminous like the sun, and the clothes he was wearing split as his body expanded. After awhile his *hal* returned to normal and the shaykh handed him the torn cloth saying, *"Close the daftar," meaning the books, "that side is done. Now move onto the next."*

Shaykh Najm al Din ق said that at that moment a spiritual awakening took place in my heart. When they returned from the gathering, his teacher suggested that since only a few pages remained to be completed from the book, it would be a good idea to finish them quickly before pursuing spirituality. So he opened the book and started to read from it when he saw Baba Kharij ق appear before him saying, *"I have taken you a thousand miles ahead, and now you want to come back."*

Shaykh Najm al Din ق said that he really regretted disobeying the shaykh even though it was not through any bad intention. However, he did as instructed and soon began to feel all kinds of spiritual experiences. He started to write about these visions and experiences but then Baba Kharij ق came to me again and said, *"Don't write. Empty your heart of all these things."*

Shaykh Najm al Din ق travelled to Hamadan, from where he received authorisation for *Hadith sharif* from the *muhadditheen,* and then he went on to Egypt. He spent a lot of time in Egypt studying *Hadith sharif*. It was during his stay in Alexandria that he thought about how people of acceptance have a *kunyah* and whether he would be given one too. He said, *"I went into a state where I disappeared from myself. I then saw Rasulullah ﷺ, and he was standing with me. It came to my heart to ask Rasulullah ﷺ, to give me a kunyah. So I asked and Rasulullah ﷺ and he replied that my kunyah is to be Abu al Jannab."*

As *Jannab* means to avoid, he is thus the leader of the people who avoid *duniya* and its traps.

Shaykh Najm al Din ق continuing his travels once arrived at the khanqah of Shaykh Isma'il al Qasri ق. He was very ill at the time and was looked after by the shaykh. It was Shaykh Qasri's ق practice to listen to *sama'* and Shaykh Najm al Din ق, being a committed scholar, did not care for such practices. One day the shaykh arranged a *mehfil* of *sama'* inside the *khanqah.* As Shaykh Najm al Din ق could not move due to his illness he felt very uncomfortable having to listen to the *sama'* and uneasy about witnessing the whirling.

Eventually, Shaykh Qasri ق came and asked him if he would like to be moved. He agreed and was thus picked up but now moved into the centre of the *sama'* circle. The shaykh placed him on the floor and just pushed to whirl him around. Shaykh Najm al Din ق said that

his head started to spin as he kept turning round and round. He then hit the wall and fainted. However, when he came around, he was cured of all the illnesses. He took *baiy'ah* from the shaykh and started to follow the path as instructed. His progress was so rapid and he was proceeding so much on spiritual experiences that he began to feel in his heart that he was even advancing his Shaykh. That very morning Shaykh Qasri ق called him to his chambers and instructed him to get ready for his journey to visit Shaykh Ammar Yasir ق.

Shaykh Najm al Din ق knew that this departure was a result of his thinking such of himself. So, when he arrived in the presence of Shaykh Ammar Yasir ق, he was not even given the chance to sit down and told to go to Egypt and visit Shaykh Ruzbihan ق, saying, *"He will take this nonsense out of your head."*

Upon arriving in the *khanqah* of Shaykh Ruzbihan in Egypt, Shaykh Najm al Din ق found all the *murids* in *muraqaba* and started to search for the shaykh. He finally found Shaykh Ruzbihan ق making *wudu* with very little water. Again a thought entered his heart about the shaykh that surely he was not very knowledgeable, making *wudu* with so little water. As he was thinking this, the shaykh finished making *wudu* and read two *rak'ahs tahiyyatul wudu.* Shaykh Najm al Din ق then stood to one side waiting for the shaykh, watching him pray, when suddenly he disappeared from his sight.

> *"In the next moment I saw that it was the Day of Judgement and the angels were coming towards the masses and dragging people away. I saw that a person sat on a nearby hill who would call out to the angels telling them to leave a person they held and to take someone else instead. Like this the angels would keep coming and dragging people away and leave all those that this person would indicate to them. Then as angels came towards me I trembled out of fear and wandered what to do. I started to move towards the hill but the angels caught me. At the moment the man called out and told them to leave me. As I was released I ran up the hill to find that the man was none other than Shaykh Ruzbihan Baqli ق. I fell in his feet and he smacked me on my back saying, "In future do not be arrogant, behave yourself.*
>
> *When I came to my senses, I saw that the Shaykh was just finishing his prayers. I went and put my head in his feet. Just as I had experienced in my vision he then hit me on my back and said the same words. At that moment all pride and doubts about the shaykh left my heart. He then told me to return to Shaykh Ammar Yasir ق saying that he was my Shaykh".*

So Shaykh Najm al Din ق returned to Shaykh Ammar Yasir ق, and completed his spiritual progress under his guidance. He was then given *khilafah* and instructed to go to Khwarazm. Shaykh Najm al Din ق pleaded that the people of that region are crazy and that they even denied the day of Judgement. Shaykh Ammar ق said, *"Do not worry. I have been there and many people have taken baiy'at."*

Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق was a prolific writer who wrote many books which contained many mystical experiences. All his works were written through personal experiences. His main works include *Fawatih al jamal wa fawatih al jalal, mirsad al ibad*, his Arabic commentary on the *Qur'an* which is in nine volumes.

Shaykh Najm al Din ق was known as *Wali Tarash,* 'the maker of walis'. As *Tarash* means to mould, he had the ability to elevate those that came into his presence with just one glance. So many people became great *Awliya* through his association and *tawajjuh*. It was said that whenever he even gazed upon someone during his intoxicated state, that person would become a *wali*. He trained many of his followers in this *tariqah* who themselves later became great masters, like Shaykh Majd al Din Baghdadi, Shaykh Attar, Shaykh Sa'd al Din Hamawi and Shaykh Najm al Din Razi. There are many other *tariqahs* which are offshoot from his *Kubrawi tariqah* as his *Khalifas* achieved great success wherever they went. The *Firdawsiyah*, *Lahabiyah*, *Nurbakhshiyah*, *Idriesiyah, Ni'matullahi* and the *Mevlavi* are to name but a few. The famous Shaykh Amir e Kabir Ali al Hamadani ق, who influenced the spread of Islam in Kashmir also belongs to this *tariqah* as do Mawlana Jalal al Din Rumi ق through Shaykh Shams Tabrizi ق.

Characteristics of the *Tariqah*

Allah created man so that his heart and spirit was able to make the journey towards Him, to observe His Glory and Beauty, which is the ultimate end of all purposes. This world and whatsoever in it, as well as the other world and whatsoever is in it, have all been created for this same goal. Allah also sent His prophets and messengers and revealed the Qur'an and the other scriptures to fulfil this same purpose.

Shaykh Simnani ق explains that of all the religions that Allah has revealed, Islam is the most perfect and complete. Indeed within Islam there are many sects, some of which do not follow spirituality and some that do follow this aspect of the faith, some that observe certain practices and conditions outwardly and some that complied with them in the inner sense. Mentioning some of these major sects such as the *Jabriya, Qadriya*, *Rafidhi, and Khariji,* he found underlying faults in each one. He identified the correct beliefs and practices within Islam only in the *Ahl al Sunnah wal jama'ah.* He explained that it was a misconception to think of *Sufis* as a separate group to the *muhadditheen* and the *mufassirin,* people following the traditions of Rasulullah ﷺ and adhering to the Divine laws. He corrected this nonsense that sufism was separate from mainstream Islam and that the spiritual aspect was more advanced, not requiring mystics to follow the Sunnah.

One of the great scholars and Sufis of the third century in Islam, Shaykh Abu Sulayman Darani ق said, "*Sometimes a point or inspiration comes in to my heart*, *from through spiritual experiences and the Sufis.* However, *I do not accept it until I have two witnesses, who are just, that confirm its authenticity. I present my inspiration to the Holy Qur'an and the blessed Sunnah. if it is in line with both of these then I accept it, otherwise I reject it*."

Even Shaykh al Akbar Muhyi al Din ibn al Arabi (R), the masters of *Kashaf* and spiritual experiences, affirmed that as there is the possibility of error in *Kashaf*, even the *Awliya* can be mistaken, unlike revelation which is protected and cannot be in error. Imam e Rabbani ق also confronted this misconception about Sufism without the *Sunnah*. He said, *"Tariqah or Sufism is the khadim of shari'ah not the master."*

He explained that there is no Sufism without this as the whole point of Sufism was to attain the *Sunnah* of Rasullullah ﷺ. It was not something to discard, but a most significant achievement to strive for. Shaykh al Muhasibi ق said that only when one has corrected his

inner being, *batin*, with *muraqaba* and *ikhlas*, sincerity, is he granted the outward appearance of *mujahida*, striving, and the ability to follow the Sunnah. It is then a sure sign that one is you being groomed and prepared for the Divine Presence.

It is because of this that the Khwajagan Masters explain that their tariqah is not actually theirs, it is the *tariqah* of Rasulullah ﷺ. In fact all *tariqah's* belong to Rasulullah ﷺ because no Shaykh has claim of inventing them as they are all following the way of Rasulullah ﷺ since that is the only way and he is the only door to the Divine Presence.

Shaykh Junayd al Baghdadi ق said, *"All the ways are closed to the people other than the way of Rasulullah ﷺ. This is what will lead you to salvation."*

Shaykh Simnani ق considered his Grandshaykh, Shaykh Junayd al Baghdadi ق as a perfect example of a true sufi and tried to follow his way. Thus, he adhered to the words of Shaykh Junayd ق saying, *"Indeed our way is muqayyad with the book of Allah and the Sunnah of Rasulullah ﷺ, what we practice and preach in tariqah is muqayyad, tied in."*

The *Awliya* testify that it is necessary to follow Rasulullah ﷺ in his *ahwal, conditions and states, his af'al, actions and practices, and his aqwal, sayings and orders.* Therefore, all those who pursue the mystical path according to their own wishes and desires achieve absolute no benefit from their exercises. Shaykh Simanani ق explains that the reason why the ancient Greeks, Christians, Bhuddists and other mystics failed was because they pursued paths according to their own personal opinions and not the guidance of a Prophet. Thus, he affirms that it is impossible to attain enlightenment and closeness to the Lord of creation unless one keeps to the way of His final Messenger, Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ.

Shaykh Simnani ق said that it is not possible to become a sufi without attaching oneself to a Shaykh. The shaykh must be from this mortal realm who is then able to guide and lead the seeker on the straight path. He explains that it is for this reason of having a living master that Allah created Sayyiduna Muhammad ﷺ, as the first mystical guide and sent him to this realm. All other Prophets, Shaykhs, mystics and guides take their spiritual authority from Rasulullah ﷺ.

Spiritual Realms

Shaykh Simnani ق said, "*When a child first enters existence, the veils of his visions are not firmly fastened. For he has but recently emerged from the Divine Presence; and the taste of intimacy lingers on him. As soon as he leaves the womb of his mother, he begins to weep in the pain of separation from that realm*."

The Shaykh prepares and guides a person back to his origin and into the Divine presence. It is this preparation that takes the seeker on a spiritual journey in this life. All the practices and exercises undertaken to refine one's conduct and character, to transform the bad traits into virtues, are the processes that support and advance the seeker in attaining closeness to his Lord, as human beings have the potential for attaining perfection in this world and making the journey back to their Lord. This is achieved after overcoming the vanity of one's own existence, which only occurs after an act of realisation. The heart is covered with veils and obstacles which cause the great distances of separation from Allah Almighty. It is only when

a person understands the origin of his own vanity and begins to learn how to lift these veils of the self that he reveals the real beauty and reaches into the Divine Presence. It is the role of the *Awliya* that guide people out of these physical veils and into the spiritual light.

As there are degrees, stages and stations of closeness to God, if a person does not overcome obstacles of this journey then he cannot attain any degree of nearness to his Lord. The seeker encounters different spiritual experiences at each stage and station which purify and refine him, making him worthy of proceeding towards the Divine Presence. At these stages Allah Almighty bestows His Divine attributes and there is a difference in the ranks of the *Awliya,* saints, and *asfiya,* the elect, in accordance with their ability and capacity. These bounties and gifts from the Divine give access to spiritual realms and domains.

Once a *murid* of Shaykh Simnani ق was on his deathbed awaiting his death. He had even stopped eating and talking and remained in this state for a few days but would not die. The people went and told this predicament to Shaykh Simnani ق, who told them to whisper in his ear, *"Your Shaykh wants to speak to you."*

So the people did as they were instructed. As one of them whispered the words in the *murid's* ear, he turned his head and then died in that instant. Later the people returned to the shaykh to ask about the reason behind this incident.

Shaykh Simnani ق explained, *"He was so focused in the Divine Realm that Angel of Death had been waiting four days to take his soul, but could not go near him. His connection was so powerful that it would not allow the Angel to go near him. It was when you whispered my order to him he severed his connection and turned his focus towards me. The angel was then able to approach him."*

Shaykh Simnani ق explains that as human beings live in one realm, and the angels live in another, there are many others amongst which there is one realm in which there is nothing but Allah Almighty. A *wali* is able to connect with all these realms and gain spiritual benefit. Many angels used to visit the *Sahaba* and would listen to them reading the *Qur'an.* The *Sahaba* would feel the presence of the *malaikah.* Rasulullah ﷺ said that the house in which the *Qur'an* is read and taught becomes the centre of *malaikah's* attention, as the light and energy of the Quran is connected with their world and so they are drawn to it.

The *Awliya* begin to possess qualities and abilities unique to each of these realms which then become attracted to them. As human beings, they remain in this world but continually receive benefit from the other realms all the time. Sometimes they are even allowed to briefly visit other realms to strengthen their connection. Thus, they become renowned and a part of those realms. These qualities can be seen in the *Awliya* such as the ability to interfere, influence and to send *madad,* help, which is a renowned ability of Shaykh Abd al Qadir al Jilani ق. Some *Awliya* even access different realms to support and guide creatures and inhabitants within those realms.

Once a *murid* of Mawlana Jalal al Din Rumi ق caught a merman, half human half fish, who pleaded for his release saying, *"I will be turned into a spectacle and people will make fun of me. I swear by Mawlana* ق *that if you let me go I will give you so much treasure."*

"How can I trust you to keep your promise?" asked the fisherman.
"I swear by my Shaykh's honour, I won't betray you, on such a day, I will bring you so many pearls, from the sea that they will be more than enough for generations."

After releasing his catch, the fisherman then returned on the promised day and was indeed brought many priceless pearls. He then asked the merman, *"How do you know of Mawlana ق and how can you be his murid? I did not know that Mawlana ق went into the sea."*

The merman replied, *"Every Thursday Mawlana ق visits us gives us sohbet. There are many murids' of Mawlana ق in the sea."*

The fisherman, Ewliya Celebi ق and his family became very wealthy and known as the family of pearls.

Qualities of the *Awliya – Himmah and Tasarruf*

Shaykh Ghumuskh Hanavi ق, said about the *khasais,* qualities, of the *Awliya* that each one posses a special quality and power, *himmah*, which is not just in this life but with him after his death. Knowledge and the Divine outpourings are the qualities of Imam Shadhili ق; miraculous abilities and chivalry are particular to Sayyid Ahmad al Rafa'i ق; mercy and compassion are the features of Sayyid Ahmad al Badawi ق; generosity and miraculous powers are qualities of Imam Ibrahim Dasuqi ق; gnosis *irfan*, and perfection is a characteristic of the of Shaykh al Akbar Muhyi al Din ibn al Arabi ق; love is the unique quality of Mawlana Rumi ق; *wajd,* movement, and *jazbat,* emotions, are the qualities of Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق.

This is why there is a clear difference between ordinary scholars and the *Awliya.* Ordinary scholars are confined to the books they have read, and do not know of anything beyond this knowledge. However, the *Awliya* are connected to these heavenly realms, and thus have access to fresh knowledge and experiences all the time. Their states are advancing and changing in every moment as they receive gifts, power and support from the other realms.

It is for this reason that particular *Awliya* are given specific awards in their time or the ability to perform and carry out accomplishments which would otherwise have taken centuries to complete. They are given powers like *himmah* and *tasarruf* with which they can change states and situations in a moment.

Shaykh Shahab al Din Suhrawardi ق once explained,

> *"As a young man I was fascinated by theology and loved to read about it. One day I accompanied my uncle, Shaykh Abu Najib Suhrawardi ق, into the presence of Shaykh Abd al Qadir al Jilani ق, as they were both close friends. After a while my uncle introduced me and then complained about me saying, "My nephew is always studying ilm ul kalam and I keep telling him to leave it.*
>
> *Shaykh Abd al Qadir ق called me closer and then pressed his hand on my chest. From that very moment I never touched ilm ul kalam again and I lost all interest in it.*

Rasulullah ﷺ said that Allah created Sayyiduna Adam عليه السلام in His own image. So the human being is seen as the mirror of the Divine Reality. Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق said that man is a micro-cosmos, which in its basic form means that the human being is the perfect example of Allah's creation; It is within man that lays the blueprint of all creation. The masters say that although the physical realm appears to be larger than the spiritual, in reality the opposite is true. Sultan al Arifin ق explained, *"Such is the spiritual realm that the heart of one Arif, man of Allah, is so vast that even if you were to put the entire universe inside it, it will seem like a small dot."*

The masters explain that all these realms are separate and have spiritual powers unique to them and their inhabitants, but man is the only creation which can access all these realms and benefit and absorb from all of them as only human beings have this capability. However, as this ability is hidden it must be discovered by overcoming and tearing the veils of the self. It is the lower self, ego, which confronts as a major obstacle preventing a person from attaining these abilities. The *Awliya* say that when the ego is strong the connection to these heavenly realms is weakened.

Shaykh Junayd al Baghdadi ق said, "*The ego summons to dangers, assists enemies, pursues whims, and is to be suspected of every sort of wickedness*."

So if the ego is not subdued it will cause harm and prevent any progress.

Shaykh Dhun nun al Misri ق said, "*The key to worship is reflection. The sign of attaining the goal is to oppose the ego and its desires. To oppose the ego is to abandon what it craves*."

Grandshaykh ق said, *"It is easier for a person to read a thousand rak'ats of nafal than to give up one haram thing."*

This indicates how difficult it is to go against the ego as it may succumb to engage in *dhikr* for hours but will not give up one *haram* thing.

The *Awliya* say that another great obstacle on this journey which is most harmful is the condition when a person feels satisfied with his situation. So Shaykh Simnani ق, like all the great *masha'ikh*, was never content with his state. He always strived to advance further and did not take comfort in one state nor was he distracted by the spiritual experiences received at each stage.

***Lata'if* – subtle substances**

Shaykh Simnani ق refers to the activation of the *lata'if,* subtle substances, which correspond to the stations of the spiritual journey, meaning that each one functions as a door or entry to a new realm. In essence there are ten *Lata'if*; five of the spiritual world and five of the physical world. *Lata'if* of the physical domain consist of the *Qalb*, heart, *Ruh*, spirit, *Sirr*, secret, *Khafi*, hidden and *Akhfa*, most hidden.

Latifa	Prophet	Colour	Temperament	Location
Qalb (Heart)	Adam عليه السلام	Yellow	Joy & delight	Two fingers below the left breast
Ruh (Spirit)	Ibrahim عليه السلام & Nuh عليه السلام	Red	Strength & steadfastness	Two fingers below the right breast
Sirr (Secret)	Musa عليه السلام	White	Willpower	Two fingers above the qalb
Khafi (Hidden)	Isa عليه السلام	Black	Peace	Two fingers above ruh (or forehead)
Akhfa (Most hidden)	Muhammad ﷺ	Green	Loving, kindness & compassion	Centre of chest (or crown of head)

As each *latifa,* substance, is attributed a specific colour and temperament, it also has a connection with a particular Prophet. The reality of each substance is in the heavenly realms. However, Allah in His Might and Wisdom has placed each one within the human body. It is a person's attachment to the world and his desires which veils these substances from the self. Shaykh Simnani ق explains that activation of each substance within the physical body links with the stimulation of the corresponding real substance in the heavenly realms. Each one can only be activated through adhering to the prescribed methods of the Shaykh and the *tariqah*. Once all five *lata'if* have been made active the capacity of the human heart increases tremendously and then they become the gateway to the heavenly realms. The *Qalb* becomes the gateway to the *Malakut, Ruh* becomes the door to the *Jabarut, Sirr* becomes the opening to *Lahut* and so forth.

Principles of the path

Shaykh Simanani ق strictly adhered to the principles of his Grandshaykh, Shaykh Junayd al Baghdadi ق and considered these as the foundation upon which further advanced practices could be placed. It is within these eight conditions that his teachings regarding spiritual experiences can be best described.

1. **Controlling the external senses**
   Shaykh Najm al Din Kubra ق advise that a person should protect the seven organs of his body from what is despicable to his Lord. One should be aware of his Lord's presence and take great care to protect the eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, hands, feet and sexual organs from what is unlawful and avoid that which is of no benefit.

2. **Remaining in ritual purity, *Wudu***
   Taking care of bodily cleanness is the weapon of a believer and it evokes inner enlightenment. Rasulullah ﷺ said, *"Wudu performed on top of wudu shall be as light upon light on the Day of Judgement."*

The masters explain that it is only in the state of *wudu* that spiritual experiences can be received. Thus, a person who is constantly in a state of *wudu* is always receiving something. It is also a source of great protection. Once Rasulullah ﷺ intended to make fresh wudu, but started to do *tayammum*, although water was nearby. A companion asked, *"Ya Rasulullah ﷺ, why are you doing tayammum, the water is just here."*

Rasulullah ﷺ replied, *"How do I know I will reach that place."*

3. Continual Fasting

This act signifies opposition to and suppression of the carnal self, which is the root cause of all veils, the foundation of separation and remoteness from Allah. The Masters advise that continual fasting is essential for the novice and for young unmarried people. It is permissible for one to reduce his food gradually as this is the way which has been followed by some *Mashayikh.*

4. Silence

Continual silence is another virtue recommended by the *Awliya*. The tongue should be protected from what is prohibited and lips should be sealed from speaking what is devoid of benefit. A person should take care not to slander, vilify backbite or utter haram and obscene words. Thus, one's speech should be in remembrance of Allah and one's silence should be an effort to contemplate

5. Continual remembrance of Allah, Dhikr

One should devote himself to a single form of *dhikr* and perform all the obligatory prayers and prescribed forms of worships. The *dhikr* of Shaykh Junayd al Baghdadi ق is to repeat *La ilaha illallah*.

It is said that *dhikr is* the key to the hidden world, '*alam al ghayb',* and the lamp of the inner world. Without a key one cannot enter a house and without a lamp a dark house is not illuminated. Hence, A person should remember his Lord like a lover remembers his beloved, and the remembrance must never leave him. He must then persevere in *dhikr* so that the *dhikr* gets attached to him, not leaving his heart empty of *dhikr* even for a moment. When he continues in this *dhikr,* it is transformed from human *dhikr* into celestial and holy, *qudsi, dhikr.* "Human *dhikr"* is that which is done with the help of sounds, letters and numbers, while the *dhikr qudsi* is that which is free from numbers, letters and sounds. After this stage, the *dhakir* loses his identity and is submerged within the object *dhikr.* He becomes unaware of his *dhikr* as well as his own being. There are many degrees of *dhikr,* some which are superior to the others, which are hard to begin; but gradually hardship and labour disappears and *dhikr* becomes the nature ones instinct.

6. Banishing of distracting thoughts

To negate all bad thoughts, ideas and distractions is to ignore them. Once a person went to his Shaykh, saying that he got too many *wiswaas (bad thoughts)* whenever he was engaged in *dhikr* or prayers. The Shaykh explained that just as flies gathered on the food as he ate, but he did not stop eating, he should continue with the *award* that he had been given. Even the *Sahaba* complained about this to Rasulullah ﷺ,

who then replied, *"Subhan Allah. This is a sign of iman, faith, as Iblis is trying to mislead you."*

After leaving the company of Hadrat Amir e Milat ق a man once became a *Wahabi*, saying, *"When I was murid of the Shaykh, all I experienced was wiswaas all the time. Since I have left the Shaykh I do not have them anymore."*

Someone reported this to Hadrat Amir e Milat ق, who said, *"A thief only goes to the place where there is some kind of treasure. The shaytan too only goes where there is something of value. Since he himself has now become the shaytan, why would he get wiswaas."*

7. To keep Tawajjuh and Rabita with the Shaykh

The Masters explain that we are like that patient who is surrounded by various maladies and evils, afflicted by various diseases and illnesses. As he is unaware of them, and even if he is aware, he does not know how to cure them. So, he has no option but to seek out a compassionate and friendly physician who can diagnose his diseases and help him to recover. In the same manner, the seeker is need of the Shaykh who acts as his guide leading him to his destination of attaining perfection so that he may reach the Divine presence.

The Masters explain the importance of the guide and association saying that although *Iblis* possessed more knowledge than the angels and was not ignorant in that sense, it was the lack of association, *sohbet* that became his downfall.

8. Refraining from complaining and objecting to Allah

Shaykh Najm al Din ق said that it is necessary for one to accept and surrender to Allah's command with his heart and body, as both are under His ownership. To surrender a property to its owner is an essential condition of submission. Indeed the owner has the right to control his property and dispose it in any way He deems proper. It is up to Him whether He honours or disgraces His slave, breathes life in him or ends it, causes sickness or bestows health on him, makes him rich or poor. Hence it is required of a servant not to raise any objection against His will. Thus, it is essential for him to be like the corpse in the hands of the bathers, *ghussal*, having no will of his own and unable to complain or object to his circumstances.

The Masters explain the significance of accepting Divine dispensations without questioning even if they are bitter without objecting or complaining. As common believers take recourse in patience, *sabr*, when a calamity befalls them, the state of the elect in a similar situation is that of acceptance, *rida.* The difference between *sabr* and *rida* is that the patient faces calamity with forbearance and will not deviate from the path of servitude, but his heart resents the misfortune. The yielding person is the one whose heart is always in the state of acceptance and happiness. Calamity and prosperity do not affect him because whatever he receives from his Lord, he considers it as a gift from a friend. He enjoys hardships inflicted upon him by his Beloved and Friend with the same pleasure as others enjoy favours.

Conclusion

Upon returning to Simnan, Shaykh Simnani ق settled at the Khanqah Sakkakiya. He then constructed a whole city called *Sufiyabad* on the outskirts of his birthplace. Very soon, the city became populated by people from all backgrounds and professions, including traders, merchants, craftsmen and his followers. As well as a place of peace, guidance and spirituality, it soon became a centre of great prosperity and wealth. The income that was generated from the city was equal to five million gold coins, which Shaykh Simnani ق dedicated in the way of Allah and distributed back amongst the city's inhabitants.

Shaykh Simnani ق continued to follow the *tariqah* under the guidance of his shaykh and engaged in *dhikr* and other rigorous practices. It is said that he regularly practiced forty-day seclusions, arba'inat. During his lifetime he completed one hundred and forty such *Khalwas* in the Khanaqah Sakkakiyya and one hundred and thirty at other locations. He passed away in *Sufiyabad* on the 22nd Rajab 736 AH, 6 March 1336 and was buried in the cemetery of Shaykh Imdad al Din Abd al Wahhab ق.

The *Kubrawi tariqah* continued to spread far and wide and branches of this path even reached parts of India. However as it started to lose its prestige over time, it was through Imam e Rabbani's ق *nisbat* in this *tariqah* that it gained protection, as the principles and practices of this path were preserved within the Khwajagan order.

Sayyiduna Isa عليه السلام said, "*A person's heart is where his treasure is*."

It is important for all human beings to realise their purpose in life. If one's passion does not increase towards Allah Almighty and he does not aspire to return to his origin, then inevitably his love will increase towards *duniya* and its desires. It is thus a sure sign of lack of faith.

However, the way adopted by Shaykh Simnani ق was to find those that had been adorned with Allah's *jamal,* beauty, compelling him to associate with them and feel humbled in their presence. It is such charismatic friends of Allah that have been graced with the Divine qualities to be able to remind a person of his reality and guide him through this physical and spiritual journey back to his origin, the Divine Presence.

Wa min Allah al Tawfiq

Al Fatiha